



SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Caregiving needs change daily. People become dependent on others. Other people suddenly find themselves in a caregiving role. People who are already providing care have new demands that affect their ability to help. Service providers may alter their programs. Thus there is always a need for information about available community services—for caregivers and for those who need care. The activities suggested here are intended to help you share this vital information with your community.

Seminar on Caregiver Services

Agenda

Have a panel of speakers from several different agencies and organizations, or just one person who can present an overview. Solicit materials in advance from organizations that provide services and display them for members of the audience. After the formal presentation, invite questions from the audience or have individual speakers make themselves available at certain locations in the room or auditorium.

Presentation Topics

Give a broad overview of services then describe some situations in which the services would be helpful and even describe particular situations (without using names) to illustrate how assistance is being provided. The vignettes presented in this kit could be used and you may wish to develop similar

descriptions from real life circumstances in your own community. After describing the service, explain how it can be obtained, how long one can have it, and what costs, if any, are involved.

Generating Attendance

Copy the poster in this kit and use it next to a flyer to publicize your event. In the flyer include a description of the program, the speakers, the date, the time and location as well as a telephone number for further information. Include phrases such as "Attendance is free" and "No prior registration is required" to remove potential obstacles to attendance. Plan on having the seminar in a location that allows flexibility for additional seating if needed.

About two to three weeks in advance, post copies of the poster and flyer in your office and ask other service providers in your community to do likewise. Mail or deliver copies to community centers, houses of worship, and civic and community organizations. Include a brief note asking the organization to print a notice in its newsletter or bulletin and provide them a short paragraph that they can use.

Publicity

Advance publicity about your event can help to generate attendance. If you are able to interest a reporter in attending the event, a story about the program can help to educate the larger community about the services that are available. Here are a few tips that can help with publicity.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Administration on Aging
Washington, DC 20201
www.aoa.gov

Calendar Listings

Check the calendar listings in your local publications. Note how much information they typically contain—usually it is no more than the same short paragraph you would send to organizations asking them to print the announcement in their newsletter or bulletin. For example, “A free public program on services available to caregivers of the elderly and disabled youth will take place on (day, date, time, location). Speakers from community organizations will explain how to use their services. For information, call (number).” Calendars will usually indicate the deadline for receiving information; if not, you should call the newspapers, ask for the calendar editor, and get the deadline. Magazines typically need calendar information more than a month in advance of their publication date.

News Release

With a news release you hope to have a story about your event published so that people will learn about it in time to attend. Even if people don’t attend, they can learn from the story that your organization can provide information they may need. It is also possible that even if a news organization chooses not to publicize the event in advance, it may decide to send a reporter and do a story afterwards. A media advisory (see below) also may encourage a reporter to attend.

About a week to 10 days in advance, send a news release or letter to the news editors and assignment desks of your newspapers and broadcast outlets, respectively. If you know the name of someone who typically covers aging issues, send the information to that person. If you aren’t sure to whom to send it, call the newsroom or assignment desk, explain that you have “a news release on an event about services for the elderly and their caregivers” and ask to whom you should send it.

Whether you do a letter or news release, be sure to cover the following information: who is sponsoring the program; what information will be presented during the program, including the speakers’ names and organizations; when and where the event will take place (name the

day of the week and date as well as the time); a number to call for information; why the event is happening; and how the program will take place (for example, “remarks by each of four speakers followed by questions from the audience”). The “why” explanation is the most important piece of information for the media. You could mention that the program is being presented as part of National Family Caregivers Month, that of the 22.4 million caregivers nationwide you estimate there are some number or percentage in your own community, that often the caregivers need help but don’t know where to find it, and that this event is designed to let them know about available services. With the letter, include vignettes giving actual examples.

Media Advisory

If you are interested in having reporters attend your event, send a media advisory one or two days ahead. Typically a media advisory has a short introductory paragraph and then in bullet fashion lists the same elements that would be in a news release or letter—who, what, when, where, why, and how. At the conclusion you can indicate that “Representatives of the media are invited to attend” and give the name and number of a person for them to contact.

Follow-up

Use this opportunity to query attendees about what they learned from the program and what services they feel they most need now or might need at some time in the future. Ask guests to fill out a short evaluation form or you and your colleagues might chat informally with guests at the end of the program. If you have a newsletter mailing list or e-mail information list, you might also ask guests if they would like to be on it.

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“Caregiver of the Year”

Send out a news release and other announcements during October seeking nominations for “Caregiver of the Year” or “Caregiver Extraordinaire” or some similar designation. Create a simple form on which to write information about the nominee, information about the proposer, and a description of what makes the caregiver extraordinary. Name a small committee to review the submissions and select the designee. You may wish to have an elected official, a TV or radio personality, and or other community leader on the committee plus a health care professional and someone from your staff.

Honor the nominee with a certificate presentation as well as a gift donated by a local business—maybe a fruit basket or perhaps a small television set. Arrange for the certificate to be presented to the designee, perhaps by your mayor or the head of your department or division. The presentation may be made at the designee’s home, at a meeting of a community organization, or at a meeting of your staff. Have a photograph taken and send it to the newspapers along with a news release. Be sure that the news release mentions that the recognition took place as part of National Family Caregivers Month and includes information about services available under the National Family Caregiver Support Program, a local number to call, the national number, and the Web address. Repeat this award activity every November.

Caregivers’ Night Out

Select an organization of home health aides, visiting nurses, or other professionals in your community who are known and can be trusted. Ask if they would seek volunteers from their membership who would donate one evening of free respite care to allow a caregiver a night out. Seek another organization that would be willing to host an event that night so it would be free to the caregivers. For example, the men’s organization at a local church might like to prepare a dinner to be served in the church hall. Approach local businesses to donate favors that could be enjoyed in one’s home (as opposed to movie tickets, for example)—a goody bag containing candy, cookies, preserves, cheeses, fruit. Ask a florist to donate centerpieces that consist

of individual bud vases grouped together so that each person at the table could take a bud vase home. See if a pianist or musical group would be willing to perform.

You will have to identify the persons to be invited. In addition to individuals already known to you, you may learn of others by calling members of the clergy as well as staff members of other social service agencies in your community. In your invitation or letter of invitation to caregivers, explain that you are doing this as part of National Family Caregivers Month. Depending on staff resources available to you, you may or may not be able to tailor each letter to indicate who suggested the recipient’s name. If you use the same invitation for everybody, then a telephone call should be made to the recipients ahead of time to tell them that an invitation will be coming and how their names got on the list. If you wish, you could expand the event to include the persons who suggested caregivers for the invitation list.

The opportunity for remarks should include mention of National Family Caregivers Month, the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and how to obtain information about the program and other services that you offer. Donors should be recognized and special mention made of the individuals who are staying home with care recipients so that guests can enjoy an evening out. As part of the program, you may wish to invite a few guests to share their caregiver stories with the gathering.

This is the kind of event that lends itself to feature coverage by a newspaper and perhaps even some television stations. You can send a news release or a media advisory to invite media to attend (see “Seminar” for details). All publicity should mention donors and the organization(s) whose members volunteered for one evening of caregiving.

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Speakers at Civic and Community Organizations

The program suggested for the seminar can also be taken on the road during the month of November. While many organizations plan their programs a year in advance, others may plan ahead on a shorter time frame—and all are subject to last minute changes. Thus it is not too late for you to call to see whether some organizations would like to have a program on caregiver issues next month. In addition to groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions Club, or Ruritan, consider organizations such as the League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women, and other women's organizations plus PTAs, hospital auxiliaries, and other volunteer groups.

Self-Help Tools

Develop a checklist to assess the functioning of an older person or a home safety checklist or similar tool. (For examples, visit the "CaregiverPA" Web site at <http://caregiverpa.psu.edu>.)

Make sure the checklist contains information about the National Family Caregiver Support Program as well as your phone number, the national number, and the Eldercare Locator address. Post the checklist on your Web site. Send out a news release saying that it is available on your site and by mail. Mention that you are making it available in conjunction with National Family Caregivers Month and include the same information about your agency and the program that appears on the checklist itself.

Newspaper Feature Story

Contact the lifestyle, feature, health, or metro/neighborhood editor to propose a human interest story that could also convey valuable information to readers. Offer to put the editor in contact with several caregivers in the community who would be willing to share their stories. Provide the fact sheets in this kit for background information. The reporter might be willing to call the caregivers individually, but it might be more interesting (and easier for the reporter) if you offered to bring the caregivers together in one place for a conversation with the reporter.

Op-Ed

You may wish to call attention to aging and caregiving issues by submitting an op-ed to your local newspaper. A sample is provided with this kit, and it has a place to insert your organization's name and telephone number.

Local Radio Show

Contact local radio stations to suggest caregiving issues as an idea for a program. Use the same approach and information you would use in communicating with newspaper editors; fact sheets in this kit provide background. Offer yourself or someone from your staff to talk about the National Family Caregiver Support Program and the services you provide. Offer also to bring along a caregiver in your community as well as his or her recipient of care—choose people who are reasonably articulate and can feel comfortable talking candidly about their situation.